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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LISBON 002564

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SUBJECT: EU DEFENSE MINISTERS INFORMAL IN PORTUGAL

Classified By: POL CHIEF TROY FITRELL, REASONS 1.4 (B,D)

¶1. (C) Summary. High Rep Solana briefed EU Defense Ministers on the first face-to-face Troika-led negotiations between Serbs and Kosovars. Solana's spokesman said the EU would support any necessary action by troops currently stationed in Kosovo to maintain stability. Solana strongly defended the ESDP mission in Afghanistan and repeatedly criticized U.S. efforts at training police. The Portuguese Minister called on his colleagues to engage in a public diplomacy effort to prop up flagging support for EU efforts in Afghanistan. Officials note that the ESDP mission for Chad/CAR will not get underway until November at least, given administrative obstacles still to be surmounted. The French are providing the bulk of the troops, but are concerned by the scant commitments of other EU member states. End summary.

Defense Ministers Informal

¶2. (U) European Union (EU) Defense Ministers, joined by other EU officials, conducted an informal defense ministerial in the Portuguese city of Evora September 28-29. They were joined, for issue-specific sessions, by the Ghanaian Minister of Defense (representing the African Union), the Turkish Minister of Defense, and the Ministers of Defense of the Maghreb countries (Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, and Tunisia). The NATO Secretary General was on the schedule to discuss NATO-EU relations, but was unable to attend.

Kosovo

¶3. (U) Portuguese Minister of Defense Nuno Severiano Teixeira, representing the EU Presidency, opened the session with an immediate stress that the EU must work with relevant institutions, including the UN and NATO, to achieve a negotiated solution. Teixeira noted that the Ministers were considering every contingency in regard to potential events in Kosovo following the December 10 expiration of the Troika's negotiating mandate, including a unilateral declaration of independence.

¶4. (U) EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana attended the second day of meetings, having just arrived from the face-to-face talks between Serbs and Kosovars in New York. His readout of the meeting stressed that the Troika could only act as a catalyst and that the value of the talks lay in finally getting the two sides to meet directly. The two sides agreed to meet again, Solana said, probably next week in Brussels where they would continue to discuss the Serbs' autonomy proposal and the Kosovars' Treaty of Mutual Friendship. Solana suggested that no new ideas would be inserted in the negotiations until after Kosovar elections.

15. (C) In marked contrast to Teixeira's comment the day before, Solana insisted that the EU was not considering post-December 10 scenarios in order not to prejudice the negotiations. Solana's spokesman told us privately that, while the Defense Ministers were not discussing post-December 10 scenarios, the EU's Foreign Ministers were engaged in that very activity; most recently at the Gymnich meeting in Viana do Castelo September 7-8. Spanish Defense Minister Jose Antonio Alonso separately noted that Spain would not support or recognize a unilateral declaration of independence.

16. (C) The spokesman noted that Defense Ministers had discussed operational issues regarding a European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) mission to Kosovo, although they had not reached agreement on how to authorize such a mission in the absence of a negotiated settlement or a UN Security Council Resolution. Troops on the ground, he noted, are there under NATO auspices and the EU "would support any necessary action to maintain stability."

Afghanistan

17. (U) Teixeira noted that, regardless of formal agreements, relations between the EU and NATO in Afghanistan were excellent. "The two indispensable organizations," he said, must succeed there, both for the future of Afghanistan and also to help Europe in both its counterterrorism and counternarcotics efforts. Teixeira further noted that EU member state governments -- including his own -- needed to engage in strong public diplomacy efforts to buttress domestic support for Afghanistan operations.

18. (C) Teixeira opined that the struggles in Afghanistan were the responsibility of the entire international community, not just NATO, and that Portugal would augment its own contributions. (Note: He may have been referring to

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Portugal's recent decision to contribute an Operational Mentoring Liaison Team to ISAF beyond Portugal's other contributions. End note.)

19. (U) In an impromptu discussion with journalists and diplomats on the margins of the meeting, Solana opined that the ESDP mission was moving with appropriate haste, despite Afghan President Karzai's criticism. When a German journalist raised other criticisms of the ESDP mission, Solana responded that "it doesn't matter what the Americans say." Solana continued that instead of "giving guns to base security guards and training every single policeman," Europe was trying to establish a train-the-trainer concept that would leave behind a legacy of citizen security. The journalist pushed back that it had been, in fact, Dutch and German officials who had made the criticisms of the ESDP mission, but Solana only repeated his earlier comments, including his criticism of the U.S. effort. (Note: The journalist asking the question had just returned from a visit to Afghanistan coordinated by NATO. End note.)

110. (C) Solana's spokesman noted privately that bilateral agreements to allow for security to the ESDP police training mission were critically important, since Turkey had blocked a formal EU-NATO agreement. Turkey attended a session to discuss this issue, but no resolution was reached. Alonso suggested separately that Afghanistan needed a UN High Representative.

Chad/CAR

111. (C) Several officials noted that the French had offered approximately 1,500 men for an ESDP mission to Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR), to protect refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP) and to contain spill-over fighting from Darfur and coordinate a response to that crisis. Each of these officials lamented that no other "large" EU state was matching the French contribution. By

the end of the meeting, a French contact told us that it looked like Belgium, Poland, Ireland, and Sweden would contribute troops. He noted that Germany and Spain were definitively out, with Germany offering only "political support." Alonso then pointedly and repeatedly confirmed that Spain would not contribute to the mission.

¶12. (C) Solana's spokesman said privately that he did not envision any deployment before November, given the administrative obstacles still to surmount. The mission, he noted, is for one year only when the mandate would be passed to the UN. Should the president of Chad still object to UN troops at that time, some solution will have to be found but the EU will make no commitments at this point beyond the initial year. He also suggested that some other small EU states might contribute, as might such non-EU states as Croatia or Macedonia.

¶13. (C) A French Colonel, attending the proceedings, told us that French military officials feared that the potential mission would be "a coalition of weakness," if a large number of countries contributed a few troops each. It would be unlikely, he said, that such troops would be prepared to operate in such an environment, would have useful or complementary skills, or could handle their own logistics. He heaped particular scorn on a country that had allegedly offered to send two staff officers. (Note: Later, a Portuguese official told us that Lisbon had been considering deploying only a few staff officers to the mission, given extensive Portuguese commitments to other military operations around the globe. End note.)

Spanish Proposal

¶14. (U) Spanish Minister of Defense Alonso twice called his own press conferences with the Spanish press to push his government's proposal that a core group of six large EU states engage in coordination on several areas relative to security. This was, he said, in advance of the EU reform treaty, but that there was no prohibition against it. This would, concluded Alonso, allow the EU to respond more rapidly to breaking crises. Teixeira -- whose country had not been asked to participate -- stated that the proposal had not been formally raised in the ministers' deliberations but that he would raise it with Alonso during upcoming bilateral talks.

¶15. (C) The French Colonel said he found this proposal "irritating." Solana's spokesman rolled his eyes and said it "was not worth discussing."

Hoffman